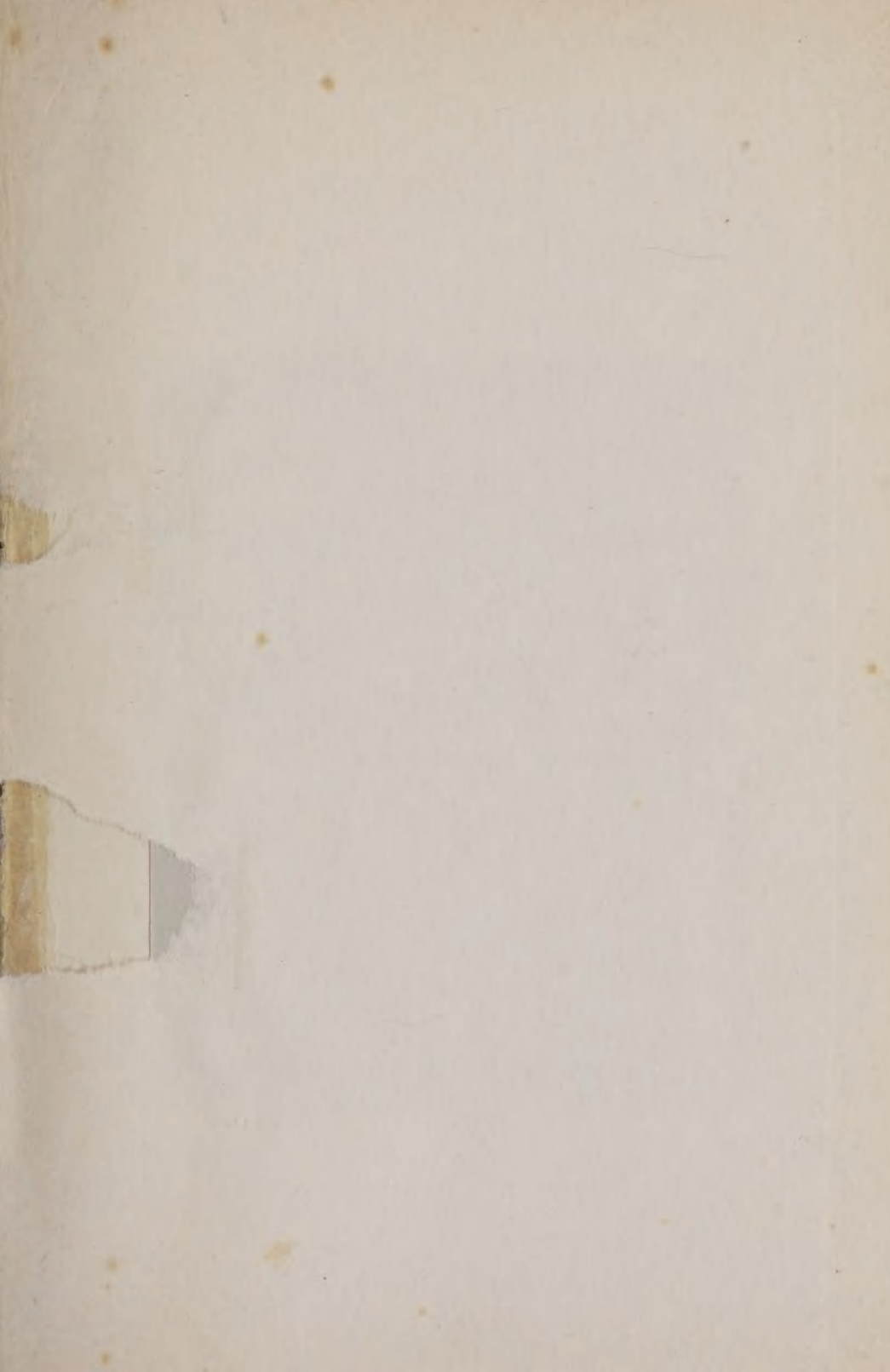


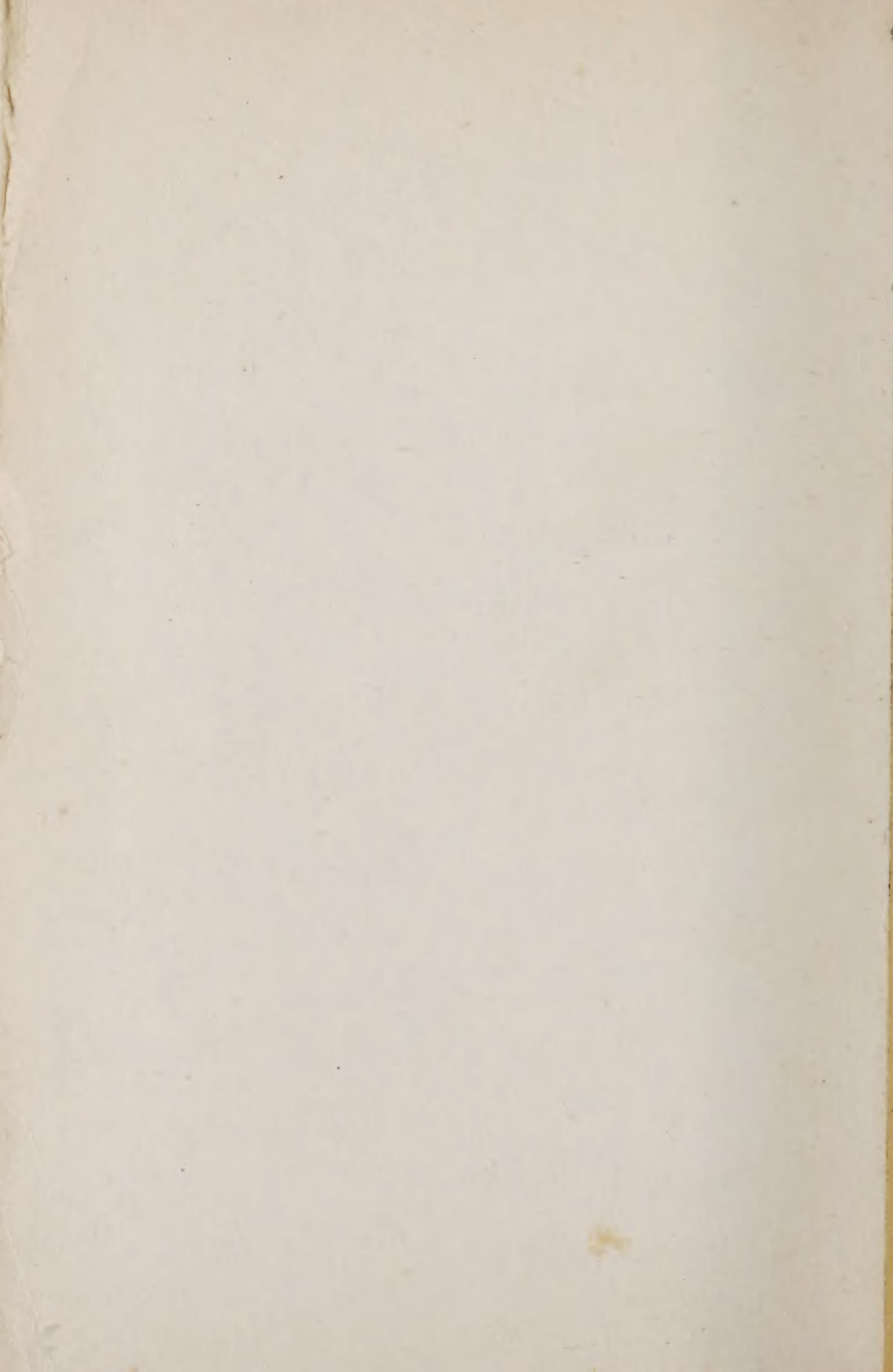


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PROBLEMS OF LIFE







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INTRODUCTION

TROTZKY'S great merit is the exceptionally wide scope of his vision. He unites the destructive elements of a revolutionary mind with the zeal of a master-builder intent on constructive work. The world knows him as one of the implacable Bolshevist leaders, but *Problems of Life*, a book published only a few months ago in Russian, shows Trotsky in a very different light. It shows that in the midst of his military and militant activities he devotes much of his energy to the peaceful work of social reconstruction, and that the centre of the problem lies for him in culture, education and morals. His book deals with the interests, duties and morals of daily life, and shows Bolshevism and the Bolshevist spirit from a new constructive side.

The book has a history. Deeply interested in the problems of Communist education, Trotsky arranged for a special conference

of Communist propagandists to meet in Moscow, and the discussions at that conference as well as the answers to an inquiry among the working-class people as to the advantages and defects of the Communists' methods of education and propaganda supplied Trotzky with the material for a series of articles which are now collected in his book, *Problems of Life*. Trotzky wrote the book for a special public. Addressing a class which is just starting on a life of its own making, and dealing with the problem of culture, he had to begin at a somewhat elementary stage. But simple as are the practical rules he lays down, the principles on which he builds his plan for progress towards a higher culture are of a wide and general interest.

Trotzky appears in this book in the rôle of a social reformer: Life itself, the life of the masses and of the individual, must be transformed, he says; new principles of life are needed, a new type of citizen must be helped to evolve, a new type of family is about to come into existence in Russia, and ought to be helped to do so.

Such is the purport of the book, and the man who writes it has evidently been sobered by the experience of power, and is striving to create a better future on the ruins of the past. He agrees on many points with the critics of the Soviet Government, and acknowledges all the mistakes and failures of the initial period of the Soviet regime, whilst giving interesting and constructive suggestions for the future.

Two admissions acquire a special importance, coming from Trotzky. In the first place he rejects most emphatically what was for a time the haughty Utopian dream of young Bolshevism—the “superstitious” idea of a distinctly proletarian class culture. The masses, in Trotzky’s new and wiser view, need communion with the universal culture of the ages, and ought to be educated accordingly. It should be the task of Russian intellectuals to help them.

Trotzky’s second admission is no less important. He says now that the development of personality is an absolute necessity for the evolution of a new type of family. Communism and Individualism, he declares in his

book, far from being antagonistic, are but different social forces mutually attracting and completing each other.

Trotsky goes so far as to admit all the destructive effects of the revolution on the morals of the working-class. He does not turn his back on realities—this gives a particular interest to his book—but he considers the present position as an inevitable result of the all-round disintegration of life and of the old standards, brought about by the revolution, and his remedy is full investigation, thorough understanding and an energetic fight against recognized moral evils.

New psychological conditions are needed, says Trotsky, to create a sounder atmosphere among the working-class, to create—what he considers should be the most important result of these conditions—a new and free family. More school teaching and culture will raise the consciousness of personality in the working-classes, but along with that the working-class must be liberated from the reactionary influence of the Church. The chapter, dealing with Trotsky's opinions on that point, is one of the most interesting in his book.

Along with the psychological change there must be also and before all, says Trotzky, a change in the economic condition of the working-class. He wants to take the burden of the private household off the shoulders of the woman in the worker's family, considering this liberation most essential, if there is to be such a thing as a free family in the working-class. He advocates the organization of communal kitchens, laundries and—this is the chief point in his book and in his Communist theory—the communal education of children.

Trotzky's thoughts on the communal education of children apply only to Russian conditions, but they should appeal to the English mind with its instinctive love of fair play. The principle of equality at the start, observed in the vast majority of English races, has been adapted by the Russian Communists to the human struggle for life, and Trotzky stands for it in his book. Let life's handicap lead to inequality, but at the start every competitor must be provided, as nearly as possible, with equal chances of success. All children must have the advantages of equal

education, and, if possible, the same chances of getting their own in life. Trotsky, representing on this point the central idea of Russian Communism, does not promise universal equality. His object is only to secure an equal right to an equal chance for unequal human beings. And one thing must be said for his view : it is essentially a national one. The problem of inequality in regard to children was always a particularly painful one to Russian minds.

N. MINSKY

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PROBLEMS OF LIFE

CHAPTER I

NOT BY POLITICS ALONE DOES MAN THRIVE

THIS simple thought should be thoroughly grasped and borne in mind by all who speak or write for propaganda purposes. Changed times bring changed tunes. The pre-revolutionary history of our party was a history of revolutionary politics. Party literature, party organizations—everything was ruled by politics in the direct and narrow sense of that word. The revolutionary crisis has intensified to a still greater degree political interests and problems. The party had to win over the most politically active elements of the working-class. At present the working-class is perfectly aware of the *fundamental* results of the revolution. It is quite

unnecessary to go on repeating over and over the story of these results. It does not any longer stir the minds of the workers, and is more likely even to wipe out in the worker's mind the lessons of the past. With the conquest of power and its consolidation as a result of the civil war, our chief problems have shifted to the needs of culture and economic reconstruction. They have become more complicated, more fractionary and in a way more prosaic. Yet, in order to justify all the past struggle and all the sacrifices, we must learn to grasp these fractionary problems of culture, and solve each of them separately.

Now, what has the working-class actually gained and secured for itself as a result of the revolution ?

1. The dictatorship of the proletariat (represented by the workers-and-peasant state under the leadership of the Communist party).

2. The Red Army—a firm support of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

3. The nationalization of the chief means of production, without which the dictatorship of the proletariat would have become a form void of substance.

4. The monopoly of foreign trade, which is the necessary condition of socialistic state-structure in capitalist environment.

These four things, definitely won, form the steel frame of all our work; and every success we achieve in economics or culture—provided it is a real achievement and not a sham—becomes in this frame a necessary part of the socialistic structure.

And what is our problem now? What have we to learn in the first place? What should we strive for? We must learn to work efficiently: accurately, punctually, economically. We need culture in work, culture in life, in the conditions of life. After a long preliminary period of struggle we have succeeded in overthrowing the rule of the exploiters by armed revolt. No such means exists, however, to create culture all at once. The working-class must undergo a long process of self-education, and so must the peasantry, either along with the workers or following them. Lenin speaks about these changed aims of our interests and efforts in his article on co-operation.

“ . . . We must admit,” he says, “ that our conception of Socialism has radically

changed on one point. All was previously centred for us—by necessity—in the political struggle, the revolution, conquest of power, etc. Now our interests have shifted far away from that—to the peaceful organization of culture. We should like to concentrate all our forces on the problems of culture and would do it—but for the international relations which force us to fight for our position among the other nations. Yet, apart from foreign politics, and in regard to internal economic relations, the centre of our work is the struggle for culture.”

I consider it of some interest to quote here a passage on “ The epoch of the struggle for culture ” out of my book, *Thoughts about the Party* :—

“ In its practical realization the revolution seems to have drifted to all sorts of minor problems : we must repair bridges, teach people to read and to write, try to put down the cost of boots in Soviet factories, fight against filth, catch thieves, instal electric power in country districts, etc. Some vulgar-minded intellectuals with dislocated brains—which makes them imagine they are poets or philosophers—speak already about the

revolution with an air of condescending superiority : ' Ha-ha ! ' they say, ' the revolution is learning how to trade. And—ha-ha-ha !—to sew on buttons.' But let the twaddlers babble away.

" The purely practical daily work, provided it is constructive from the point of view of Soviet economics and Soviet culture—Soviet retail trade included—is not at all a policy of ' small deeds,' and does not necessarily bear the impress of pettiness. Small deeds without great issues abound in the life of men, but no great issues are possible without small achievements. To be more precise, at a time of great issues, small deeds, being a part of large problems, cease to be small.

" The problem in Russia at the present moment is the constructiveness of the working-class. For the first time in history the working-class is doing constructive work for its own benefit and on its own plan. This historic plan, though still extremely imperfect and muddled, will connect all the parts and particles of the work, all its ins and outs, by the unity of a vast creative conception.

" All our separate and minor problems—Soviet retail trade included—are parts of the general plan which will enable the ruling

working-class to overcome its economic weakness and lack of culture.

“Socialistic constructive work is systematic construction on a vast scale. And amid all the ups and downs, amid all the errors and retreats, amid all the intricacies of the N.E.P. (New Economic Policy), the party carries on its plan, educates the young generation in the spirit of it, teaches everyone to connect their private aims with the common problem of all who may call on them one day to sew on a Soviet button, and the next—meet death fearlessly under the banner of Communism.

“We must, and shall, demand serious and thorough specialized training for our young people, in order to save them from the great defect of the present generation—from superficial dabbling in generalities—but all specialized knowledge and skill must serve a common purpose that will be grasped by everyone.”

Nothing, therefore, but the problems of our international position keeps us, as Lenin tells us, from the struggle for culture. Now these problems, as we shall see presently, are not altogether of a different order. Our international position largely depends on

the strength of our self-defence—that is to say, on the efficiency of the Red Army—and, in this vital aspect of our existence as a state, our problem consists almost entirely of work for culture : we must raise the level of the army, and teach every single soldier to read and to write. The men must be taught to read books, to use manuals and maps, must acquire habits of tidiness, punctuality and thrift. It cannot be by some miraculous means all done at once. After the civil war and during the transitional period of our work, attempts were made to save the situation by a specially invented “proletarian doctrine of militarism,” but it was quite lacking in any real understanding of our actual problems. The same thing happened in regard to the ambitious plan for creating an artificial “proletarian culture.” All such “quests of the philosophic stone” combine despair at our deficiency in culture with a faith in miracles. We have, however, no reason to despair, and, as to miracles and childish quackeries like “proletarian culture” or “proletarian militarism,” it is high time to give such things up. We must see to the development of culture within the frame of the dictatorship of the proletariat,

and this alone can secure the socialistic import of the revolutionary conquests. Whoever fails to see this will play a reactionary part in the development of party thought and party work.

When Lenin says that at the present moment our work is less concerned with politics than with culture, we must be quite clear about the terms he uses, so as not to misinterpret his meaning. In a certain sense politics always ranks first. Even the advice of Lenin to shift our interests from politics to culture is a piece of political advice. When the Labour party of a country comes to decide that at some given moment the economical problems and not the political should take first place, the decision itself is political. It is quite obvious that the word "politics" is used here in two different meanings : firstly, in a wide materialistic and dialectic sense, as the totality of all guiding principles, methods, systems which determine collective activities in all domains of public life ; and, on the other hand, in a restricted sense, specifying a definite part of public activity, directly concerned with the struggle for power and opposed to economic work, to the struggle for culture, etc. Speaking of

politics as of concentrated economics, Lenin meant politics in the wide philosophic sense. But when he urged: "Let us have less politics and more economics," he referred to politics in the restricted and special sense. Both ways of using the word are sanctioned by tradition and are justified.

The Communist party is political in the wide historic or, we may also say, philosophic sense. The other parties are political only in the restricted sense of the word. The shifting of the interests of our party to the struggle for *culture* does not therefore weaken the *political* importance of the party. The party will concentrate its activity on the work for culture, and take the leading part in this work—this will constitute its historically leading, i.e. political, part. Many and many more years of socialistic work, successful from within and secure from without, are still needed before the party could do away with its shell of party structure and dissolve in a socialistic community. This is still so very distant that it is of no use to look so far ahead. . . . In the immediate future the party must preserve in full its fundamental characteristics: unity of purpose, centralization, discipline and, as a result of

it, fitness for the fight. But it needs under the present conditions a very sound economic base to preserve and to develop these priceless assets of Communist party spirit. Economic problems, therefore, rank first in our politics, and only in conformity with them does the party concentrate and distribute its forces and educate the young generation. In other words, politics on a large scale require that all the work of propaganda, distribution of forces, teaching and education should be based at present on the problems of economics and culture, and not on politics in the restricted and special sense of the word.

The proletariat is a powerful social unity which manifests its force fully during the periods of intense revolutionary struggle for the aims of the whole class. But within this unity we observe a great variety of types. Between the obtuse illiterate village shepherd and the highly qualified engine-driver there lie a great many different states of culture and habits of life. Every class, moreover, every trade, every group consists of people of different age, different temperaments and with a different past. But for this variety, the work of the Communist party might

have been an easy one. The example of the west of Europe shows, however, how difficult this work is in reality. One might say that the richer the history of a country, and, at the same time, of its working-class, the greater within it the accumulation of memories, traditions, habits, the larger the number of old groupings—the harder it is to achieve a revolutionary unity of the working-class. The Russian proletariat is poor in class history and class traditions. This has undoubtedly facilitated its revolutionary education leading up to October. It causes, on the other hand, the difficulty of constructive work after October. The Russian workman—except the very top of the class—usually lacks the most elementary habits and notions of culture (in regard to tidiness, instruction, punctuality, etc.). The West European worker possesses these habits. He has acquired them, by a long and slow process, under the bourgeois regime. This explains why in the west of Europe the working-class—its superior elements, at any rate—is so strongly attached to the bourgeois regime with its democracy, freedom of the capitalist press, and all the other blessings. The belated bourgeois regime in Russia had no time

to do any good to the working-class, and the Russian proletariat broke from the bourgeoisie all the more easily, and overthrew the bourgeois regime without regret. But for the very same reason the Russian proletariat is only just beginning to acquire and to accumulate the simplest habits of culture, doing it already in the conditions of a socialistic worker's State. History gives nothing free of cost. Having made a reduction on one point—in politics, it makes us pay the more on another—in culture. The more easily (comparatively, of course) did the Russian proletariat pass through the revolutionary crisis, the harder becomes now its socialistic constructive work. But, on the other side, such is the frame of our new social structure, marked by the four characteristics mentioned above, that all genuine, efficient efforts in the domain of economics and culture bear practically the impress of socialism. Under the bourgeois regime the workman, with no desire or intention on his part, was continually enriching the bourgeoisie, and did it all the more, the better his work was. In the Soviet state a conscientious and good worker, whether he cares to do it or not (in case he is not in the

party and keeps away from politics), achieves socialistic results and increases the wealth of the working-class. This is the doing of the October revolution, and the N.E.P. (New Economic Policy) has not changed anything in this respect.

Workmen who do not belong to the party, who are deeply devoted to production, to the technical side of their work, are many in Russia—but they are not altogether “unpolitical,” not indifferent to politics. In all the grave and difficult moments of the revolution they were with us. The overwhelming majority of them were not frightened by October, did not desert, were not traitors. During the civil war many of them fought on the different fronts, others worked for the army, supplying the munitions. They may be described as “non-political,” but in the sense that in peace time they care more for their professional work or their families than for politics. They all want to be good workers, to get more and more efficient each in his particular job, to rise to a higher position—partly for the benefit of their families, but also for the gratification of their perfectly legitimate professional ambition. Implicitly every one of them, as I said before,

does socialistic work without even being aware of it. But being the Communist party, we want these workers consciously to connect their individual productive work with the problems of socialistic construction as a whole. The interests of Socialism will be better secured by such united activities, and the individual builders of Socialism will get a higher moral satisfaction out of their work.

But how is this to be achieved? To approach this type of workman on purely political lines is very difficult. He has heard all the speeches that were spoken, and does not care for more. He is not inclined to join the party. His thoughts are centred on his work, and he is not particularly satisfied with the present conditions in the workshop, in the factory, in the trust. Such workmen generally try to get at the bottom of things themselves, they are not communicative, and are just the class which produces self-taught inventors. They are not responsive to politics—at least not whole-heartedly—but they might and should be approached on matters concerning production and technics.

One of the members of the Moscow Conference of mass propagandists, Comrade Kolzoff, has pointed to the extreme shortage of manuals, handbooks and guides published in Soviet Russia for the study of different trades and handicrafts. The old books of such a kind are mostly sold out, and besides, many of them are technically behind the time, whereas politically they are usually imbued with an exploiting capitalistic spirit. New technical handbooks are very few and very difficult to get, having been published at random by different publishers or State departments without any general plan. From the technical point of view they are not always satisfactory ; some of them are too abstract, too academic and politically usually colourless, being, in fact, slightly disguised translations of foreign books. What we really want is a series of new handbooks—for the Soviet locksmith, the Soviet cabinet maker, the Soviet electrician, etc. The handbooks must be adapted to our up-to-date technics and economics, must take into account our poverty, and, on the other hand, our big possibilities, must try to introduce new methods and new habits into our industrial life. They must—as far as possible

anyhow—reveal socialistic vistas corresponding to the wants and interests of technical development (this includes problems of standardization, electrification, economic plannings). Socialistic principles and conclusions must not be mere propaganda in such books. They must form an integral part of the practical teaching. Such books are very much needed, considering the shortage of qualified workers, the desire of the workers themselves to become more efficient, and considering also their interrupted industrial experience in conjunction with the long years of imperialistic and civil war. We are faced here with an extremely gratifying and important task.

It is not an easy matter, of course, to create such a series of handbooks. Good practical workers do not write handbooks, and theorists, who do the writing usually, have no experience of the practical side of work. Very few of them, moreover, have socialistic views. The problem can be solved nevertheless—yet not by “simple,” i.e. routine methods, but by combined efforts. The joint work of, say, three authors is necessary to write or, at least, to edit a handbook. There should be a specialist with

a thorough technical training, one who knows the conditions of our present production in the given trade or is able to get the necessary information; the other two should include a highly qualified worker of that particular trade, one who is interested in production, and, if possible, has some inventive aptitudes, and a professional writer, a Marxist, a politician with industrial and technical interests and knowledge. In this or some similar way, we must manage to create a model library of technical handbooks on industrial production. The books must, of course, be well printed, well stitched, of a handy size and inexpensive. Such a library would be useful in two ways: it would raise the standard of work and contribute thereby to the success of socialistic State construction, and, on the other hand, it would attach a very valuable group of industrial workers to Soviet economics as a whole, and, consequently, to the Communist party.

To possess a series of handbooks is, of course, not all we want. I have dealt at some length with this particular question just to give an example of the new methods required by the new problems of the present day. There is much more to do in the interests

of the "non-political" industrial workers. Trade journals should be published, and technical societies ought to be started. A good half of our professional press should cater for the industrial worker of that "non-political" but efficient type, if it wants to have readers outside the mere staff of the trade unions. The most telling political arguments, however, for the workers of that type are our practical achievements in industrial matters—every casual success in the management of our factories and workshops, every efficient effort of the party in this direction.

The political views of the industrial workman who matters most for us now, might be best illustrated by the following attempt to formulate approximately his rarely expressed thoughts.

"Well," he would say, "all that business of the revolution and the overthrowing of the bourgeoisie is right enough. Nothing to be said against it. It's done once and for ever. We have no use for the bourgeoisie. Nor do we need its Menshevist or other help-mates. As to the 'liberties of the press'—that does not matter. That is not the point either. But what about economics? You,

Communists, have undertaken to manage it all. Your aims and plans are excellent—we know that. Don't go on repeating what they are. We know all about it, we agree with you and are ready to back you—but how are you actually going to do things? Up till now—why not tell the truth—you often did the wrong things. Well, yes. We know that it cannot all be done at once, that you have to learn the job, and mistakes and blunders can't be avoided. That is all quite true. And since we have stood the crimes of the bourgeoisie, we must bear with the mistakes of the revolution. But there is a limit to everything. In your Communist ranks there are also all sorts of people just as among us poor sinners. Some do actually learn their jobs, are honestly intent on work, try to achieve practical results, but many more get off with idle talk. And they are doing much harm because with them business is simply slipping away through their fingers. . . .”

That is how they reason, the workers of that type—clever, efficient locksmiths, or cabinet makers, or founders, not excitable, rather of passive disposition in politics, but serious, critical, somewhat sceptical, yet

always faithful to their class—proletarians of a high standard. In the present stage of our work the party must take this type of workmen most specially into account. Our hold on them—in economics, production, technics—will be the most telling political sign of our success in the work for culture in the last sense of the word, in the sense in which it is used by Lenin.

Our special interest in the efficient workman is in no way opposed to the other most important problem of the party—the great interest in the young generation of the proletariat. The young generation grows up in the conditions of the given moment, grows sound and strong, according to the way in which certain well-determined problems are solved. We want our young generation, in the first place, to develop into good, highly qualified workers, devoted to their work. It must grow up with the firm conviction that its productive work is at the same time work for Socialism. The interest in the professional training, the desire for efficiency, will naturally give a great authority in the eyes of our young proletarians to “the old men” who are experts in their trade, and who, as I said above, stand usually outside the

party. We see, in consequence, that our interest in good, honest and efficient workers serves the cause of a thorough education of the growing young generation. Without it there would be no onward march to Socialism.

CHAPTER II

HABIT AND CUSTOM

IN the study of life it is peculiarly manifest to what an extent individual man is the product of environment rather than the creator of it. Daily life, i.e. conditions and customs, are, more than economics, "evolved behind men's backs," in the words of Marx. Conscious creativeness in the domain of custom and habit occupies but a negligible place in the history of man. Custom is agglomerated from the elemental experience of men ; it is changed, too, in its element, by technical progress or the occasional stimulus of revolutionary struggle. But in the main, it reflects more of the past of human society than the present.

Our proletariat is not old and has no ancestry. It has emerged in the last ten years partly from the petty townspeople and chiefly from the peasantry. The life of our proletariat clearly reflects its social origin.

We have only to recall *The Morals of Rasteryaev Street*, by Gleb Uspensky. What are the main characteristics of the Rasteryaevs, i.e. the Tula workmen of the last quarter of the last century? They are all townsmen or peasants, who, having lost all hope of becoming independent men, formed a combination of the uneducated petty bourgeoisie and the destitute. Since then the proletariat has made a big stride, but more in politics than in life and morals. Life is conservative. In its primitive aspect, of course, Rasteryaev Street no longer exists. The brutal treatment accorded to apprentices, the servility practised before employers, the vicious drunkenness, and street hooliganism have vanished. But in the relations of husband and wife, parents and children, in the domestic life of the family, fenced off from the whole world, Rasteryaevism is still firmly implanted. We want years and decades of economic growth and culture to banish Rasteryaevism from its last refuge—individual and family life—re-creating it from top to bottom in the spirit of collectivism.

Problems of family life were the subject of a particularly heated discussion at a conference of the Moscow Propagandists, which we

have already mentioned. In regard to this everyone had some grievance. Impressions, observations and questions, especially, were numerous ; but there was no answer to them, for the very questions remain semi-articulate, never reaching the press or being aired at meetings. The life of the workman in mass and the Communist, and the line of contact between the two provides such a big field for observation, deduction and practical application !

Our literature does not help us in this respect. Art, by nature, is conservative ; it is removed from life and is little able to catch events on the wing as they happen. *The Week*, by Lebedinsky, excited a burst of enthusiasm among some of our comrades, an enthusiasm which appeared to me excessive, and dangerous for the young author. In regard to its form, *The Week*, notwithstanding its marks of talent, has the characteristics of the work of a schoolboy. It is only by much persistent, detailed work that Lebedinsky can become an artist. I should like to think that he will do so. However, this is not the aspect which interests us at the moment. *The Week* gave the impression of something new and inartistic

in the achievement of the "Communist" section of life with which it dealt. But in this respect especially, the matter of the book is not profound. Gubkom is presented to us with too much of the laboratory method; it has no deeper roots and is not organic. Hence, the whole of *The Week* becomes an episodic digression, a novel of revolutionary emigrants drawn from the life. It is, of course, interesting and instructive to depict the life of "Gubkom," but the difficulty and significance come when the life of Communist organization enters into the everyday life of the people. Here, a firm grip is required. The Communist party is at the present moment the principle lever of every conscious forward movement. Hence, its unity with the masses of the people becomes the root of historic action, reaction and resistance.

The Communist theory has outstripped our actual everyday life by ten years, and in some respects by a century. Were it not for this fact, the Communist party could not have been the historic factor in the great revolutionary impulse. Thanks to its realism, its dialectic flexibility, the Communist theory evolves political methods, which will ensure

its influence under every condition. But a political idea is one thing and habit and custom are another. Politics are flexible, but custom is unyielding and obdurate. That is why there are so many daily conflicts in working-class circles, along the line where consciousness rests on tradition—conflicts that are the harder because, in a social sense, they remain inarticulate. They are not reflected by our literature, nor by our publicists. Our press is silent on these questions. And as for the new artistic school which tries to march in line with the revolution, life does not exist for them at all. You see, their desire is to reconstruct life, not to depict it. But life cannot be sucked from the thumb. It can be constructed from the elements we see which are capable of development. Thus, before we can construct, we must know what there is already. This refers not merely to the effect on custom, but on every conscious human activity in general. We must know what exists and in what direction existing things are changing before we can participate in the construction of life. Show us, and yourselves, first of all, what is going on in the factory, in working-class spheres, in the

co-operative unit, in the club, in the school, in the street, in the public-house, learn to understand what is going on there, i.e. find the necessary perspective for the splinters of the past and the embryos of the future. This appeal refers alike to fiction writers and publicists. Show us life as it has emerged from the revolutionary oven.

It is not hard to surmise, however, that appeals alone will not divert the attentions of our writers. We need a proper organization of this matter and proper leadership. The study and enlightenment of working-class life must, in the first place, be made the foremost task of journalists, of those, at any rate, who possess eyes and ears. In an organized way we must put them on this work, instruct, correct, lead and educate them thus to become revolutionary writers, who will write of everyday life. At the same time, we must broaden the angle of outlook of working-class newspaper correspondents. Certainly, almost any of them could produce more interesting and entertaining correspondence than we have nowadays. For this purpose, we must deliberately formulate questions, set proper tasks, stimulate discussion and help to sustain it.

In order to raise the culture of the working-class a step higher, its vanguard must, first of all, study its life. To do this, it must know the life. The bourgeois class, chiefly through their intellectuals, had already solved this problem, to a large extent, even before the winning of power ; it was a rich class while in opposition, and artists, poets and publicists served it, helped it to think, or did its thinking for it.

In France, in the eighteenth century, the so-called age of enlightenment was a time when bourgeois philosophers concentrated on the different aspects of social and individual life and strove to rationalize them, i.e. to reconstruct them according to the law of reason. They dealt with questions not only concerning politics and the Church, but with questions relating to the sexes, the education of children and so on. There is no doubt that by the mere raising and consideration of these questions, they were largely instrumental in raising the culture of the individual—the bourgeois, of course, principally the intellectual. The whole force of the advanced philosophy of rationalism, i.e. the reconstruction of social and personal relationships according to the law of reason, rested, how-

ever, on the fact of the private ownership of the means of production, which became the new corner-stone of the new society, founded on reason. Private ownership conditioned the market, the blind play of economic force, not directed by "reason." Market economic relationships brought about market conditions of life. So long as the market reigned, a genuine rationalization of the life of the masses of the people could not be thought of. That is why the practical application of the ideas of the rationalist philosophers of the eighteenth century was so limited, though they were sometimes very penetrating and daring in their deductions.

In Germany the ray of enlightenment fell on the first half of the last century. At the head of the movement was "Young Germany," with its leaders, Heine and Börne. At bottom, this again was the critical work of the left wing of the bourgeois class, its intellectuals, who declared war on slavery, servility, Philistinism, burgher stupidity and prejudice, and who aspired, but now with greater scepticism than its French fore-runners, to establish the reign of reason. The movement was absorbed later in the petty bourgeois revolution of the year '48,

which proved powerless even to cast off the numerous German dynasties, not to mention the reconstruction of human life from top to bottom.

In our backward Russia, enlightenment assumes a rather broader character in the second half of the nineteenth century. Chernishevsky, Pisarev, Dobrolubov, issuing from the school of Belinsky, directed their criticism not so much against economic questions as against muddle and reaction and Eastern ways of life. Against the old traditions they set up the type of the new man, the "realist," "utilitarian," who desires to build his life on the laws of reason, and is soon transformed into a "critical, thinking individual." But if the French rationalists of the eighteenth century were, only in a small degree, able to change life and morals, formulated not by the philosophers, but by the market; if the historic part played by the German rationalists was still more limited, then the actual influence of the teaching of the Russian intelligentsia on the life and morals of the people was altogether negligible. When all is said and done, the historic part played by Russian rationalists, including the People's Movement, is limited to having

prepared the conditions for the advent of parties of the revolutionary proletariat.

It is only when the working-class won power that the conditions were created for a genuine transformation of life, down to its deepest foundation. To rationalize life, i.e. to transform it according to the dictates of reason, is not possible without the rationalization of production, for the roots of the conditions of life lie in economics. It is only Socialism that has set itself the task of embracing reason and subjecting all the activities of man to it. The bourgeois class of the most advanced tendencies, limited itself only to the rationalization of technology on the one hand (through natural science, chemistry, invention, machinery), and politics on the other (through Parliament); but it did not rationalize economics, which became the arena of blind competition. Hence, ignorance and blindness continue to reign in the life of bourgeois society. The power that has been won by the working-class is confronted with the task of subjecting the foundations of human relationships to a conscious control and leadership. Only this will open up the possibility of a rational reconstruction of life.

This is a fact which makes our successes in the domain of custom and habit dependent on our successes in the domain of economics. It is true, however, that even under present economic conditions we could introduce a larger element of criticism, initiative and rationalism into our life. It is one of the tasks of our epoch. What is still more obvious, however, is, that a fundamental reconstruction of life—the liberation of women from the position of domestic slaves, the communal education of children, the freeing of marriage from the elements of economic constraint, and so on—is only practicable to the extent in which the growth of socialistic forms of economics counterbalance the capitalistic.

A critical examination of custom and habit has become a necessity, so that life, which is conservative by its traditions of a thousand years, shall not lag behind the progressive possibilities which are opening up, even under our economic resources of to-day, and may open up to-morrow. On the other hand, even the smallest successes in the domain of custom and habit, which are, naturally, bound to raise the culture of working men and women, would speedily

extend the possibility of a rationalization of industry, and bring a quicker realization of socialist institutions ; the latter, in its turn, opening up the possibility of new conquests in the domain of the socialization of life. The dependence here is logical. The principal factor is economics ; but, as to influencing economics, we, the Communist party, and the workers' State, can only do so through the working-class, by persistently raising the technical knowledge and the degree of culture of its constituent elements. Culture in a workers' State serves Socialism, and Socialism stands for a vigorous expansion of culture, genuine culture, outside class, human and humane.

CHAPTER III

VODKA, THE CHURCH AND THE CINEMA

THERE are two big facts which have set a new stamp on working-class life. The one is the advent of the eight-hour working day, the other, the prohibition of the sale of vodka. The liquidation of the vodka monopoly, for which the war was responsible, preceded the revolution. The war demanded such enormous means that Tsarism was able to renounce the drink revenue as a negligible quantity, a milliard more or less making no very great difference. The revolution inherited the liquidation of the vodka monopoly as a fact ; it adopted the fact, but was actuated by considerations of principle. It was only with the conquest of power by the working-class, which became the conscious creator of the new economic order, that the combating of alcoholism by the country, by education and prohibition, was able to receive its due historic

significance. The circumstance that the "drunkards' " budget was abandoned during the Imperial War does not alter the fundamental fact that the abolition of the system by which the country encouraged people to drink is one of the iron assets of the revolution.

As regards the eight-hour working day, that was a direct conquest of the revolution. As a fact in itself, the eight-hour working day produced a radical change in the life of the worker, setting free two-thirds of the day from factory duties. This provides a foundation for a root change of life for development and culture, social education and so on, but a foundation only. The chief significance of the October revolution consists in the fact that the economic betterment of every worker automatically raises the material well-being and culture of the working-class as a whole.

"Eight hours work, eight hours sleep, eight hours play," says the old formula of the workers' movement. In our circumstances, it assumes a new meaning. The more profitably the eight hours work is utilized, the better, more cleanly and more hygienically can the eight-hour sleep be

arranged for, and the fuller and more cultured can the eight hours of leisure become.

The question of amusements in this connection becomes of greatly enhanced importance in regard to culture and education. The character of a child is revealed and formed in its play. The character of an adult is clearly manifested in his play and amusements. But in the forming of the character of a whole class, when this class is young and moves ahead, like the proletariat, amusements and play ought to occupy a prominent position. The great French Utopian reformer, Fourier, repudiating Christian ascetism and the suppression of the natural instincts, constructed his *phalansterie* (the communes of the future) on the correct and rational utilization and combination of human instincts and passions. The idea is a profound one. The working-class state is neither a spiritual order nor a monastery. We take people as they have been made by nature, and as they have been in part educated and in part distorted by the old order. We seek a *point d'appui* in this vital human material for the application of our party and revolutionary-state lever. The longing for amusement, distraction, sight-seeing and

laughter is the most legitimate desire of human nature. We are able, and, indeed, are obliged to give the satisfaction of this desire a higher artistic quality, at the same time making amusement a weapon of collective education, freed from the guardianship of the pedagogue and the tiresome habit of moralizing.

The most important weapon in this respect, a weapon excelling any other, is, at the present day, the cinema. This amazing spectacular innovation has cut into human life with a successful rapidity never experienced in the past. In the daily life of capitalistic towns the cinema has become just such an integral part of life as the bath, the beer-house, the Church and other indispensable institutions, commendable and otherwise. The passion for the cinema is rooted in the desire for distraction, the desire to see something new and improbable, to laugh and to cry, not at your own, but at other people's misfortunes. The cinema satisfies these demands in a very direct, visual, picturesque and vital way, requiring nothing from the audience ; it does not even require them to be literate. That is why the audience bears such a grateful love to the cinema, that inexhaustible fount of impressions and

emotions. This provides a point, and not merely a point, but a huge square, for the application of our educational-socialistic energies.

The fact that we have so far, i.e. in nearly six years, not taken possession of the cinema shows how slow and uneducated we are, not to say, frankly, stupid. This weapon which cries out to be used, is the best instrument for propaganda, technical, educational and industrial propaganda, propaganda against alcohol, propaganda for sanitation, political propaganda, any kind of propaganda you please, a propaganda which is accessible to everyone, which is attractive, cuts into the memory and may be made a possible source of revenue.

In attracting and amusing, the cinema already rivals the beer-shop and the public-house. I do not know whether New York or Paris possess at the present time more cinemas or public-houses, or which of these enterprises yields more revenue. But it is manifest that, above everything, the cinema competes with the public-house in the matter of how the eight leisure hours are to be filled. Can we secure this incomparable weapon? Why not? The government of the Tsar, in

a few years, established an intricate net of State public-houses. The business yielded a yearly revenue of almost a milliard gold roubles. Why should not the government of the workers establish a net of State cinemas? This apparatus of amusement and education could more and more be made to become an integral part of the national life. Using it to combat alcoholism, it could, at the same time, be made into a revenue-yielding concern. Is it practicable? Why not? It is, of course, not easy. It would be, at any rate, more natural, and more in keeping with the organizing energies and abilities of a workers' State, than, let us say, the attempt to restore the vodka monopoly.

The cinema competes not only with the public-house, but also with the Church. And this rivalry may become fatal for the Church if we make up for the separation of the Church from the socialist State by the fusion of the socialist State and the cinema.

Religiousness among the Russian working-classes practically does not exist. It actually never existed. The Orthodox Church was a daily custom and a Government institution. It never was successful in penetrating deeply into the consciousness of the masses, nor in

blending its dogmas and canons with the inner emotions of the people. The reason for this is the same—the uncultured condition of old Russia, including her Church. Hence, when awakened for culture, the Russian worker easily throws off his purely external relation to the Church, a relation which grew on him by habit. For the peasant, certainly, this becomes harder, not because the peasant has the more profoundly and intimately entered into the Church teaching—this has, of course, never been the case—but because the inertia and monotony of his life are closely bound up with the inertia and monotony of Church practices.

The worker's relation to the Church (I am speaking of the non-party mass worker) holds mostly by the thread of habit, the habit of women in particular. Ikons still hang in the home because they are there. The ikons decorate the walls; it would be bare without them; people would not be used to it. A worker will not trouble to buy new ikons, but has not sufficient will to discard the old ones. In what way can the spring festival be celebrated if not by Easter cake? And Easter cake must be blessed by the priest, otherwise it will be so meaning-

less. As for church-going, the people do not go because they are religious ; the Church is brilliantly lighted, crowded with men and women in their best clothes, the singing is good—a range of social-æsthetic attractions not provided by the factory, the family or the workaday street. There is no faith, or practically none. At any rate, there is no respect for the clergy or belief in the magic force of ritual. But there is no active will to break it all. The element of distraction, pleasure and amusement plays a large part in Church rites. By theatrical methods the Church works on the sight, the sense of smell (through incense), and through them, on the imagination. Man's desire for the theatrical, a desire to see and hear the unusual, the striking, a desire for a break in the ordinary monotony of life, is great and ineradicable ; it persists from early childhood to advanced old age. In order to liberate the common masses from ritual and the ecclesiasticism acquired by habit, anti-religious propaganda alone is not enough. Of course, it is necessary, but its direct practical influence is limited to a small minority of the more courageous in spirit. The bulk of the people are not affected by anti-religious propaganda—not

because their spiritual relation to religion is so profound—on the contrary, there is no spiritual relation at all, there is only a formless, inert, mechanical relation, which has not passed through the consciousness, a relation like that of the street sight-seer, who, on occasion, does not object to joining in a procession or a pompous ceremony, or listening to singing or waving his arms.

Meaningless ritual, which lies on the consciousness like an inert burden, cannot be destroyed by criticism alone; it can be supplanted by new forms of life, new amusements, new and more cultured theatres. Here, again, thoughts go naturally to the most powerful—because it is the most democratic instrument of the theatre—the cinema. Having no need of a clergy in brocade, etc., the cinema unfolds on the white screen spectacular images of greater grip than are provided by the richest Church, grown wise in the experience of a thousand years, or by mosque or synagogue. In Church only one drama is performed, and always one and the same, year in, year out, while in the cinema next door you will be shown the Easters of heathen, Jew and Christian, in their historic sequence, with their similarity of ritual.

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The cinema amuses, educates, strikes the imagination by images, and liberates you from the need of crossing the Church door. The cinema is a great competitor not only of the public-house, but of the Church. Here is an instrument which we must secure at all costs !

CHAPTER IV

FROM THE OLD FAMILY TO THE NEW

THE inner relations and happenings within the family are, by their very nature, the most difficult to investigate, the least subject to statistics. It is not easy, therefore, to say in how far family ties are the more easily and frequently broken nowadays (in actual life, not merely on paper) than formerly. To a great extent we must be content to judge by the eye. The difference, moreover, between prerevolutionary times and the present day is that formerly all the troubles and dramatic conflicts in working-class families used to pass unnoticed by the working-classes themselves ; whereas now, a large upper part of the workers occupy responsible posts, their life is much more in the limelight, and every domestic tragedy in their life becomes a subject of much comment and sometimes of idle gossip.

Subject to this serious reservation, there is no denying, however, that family relations, those of the proletarian class included, are shattered. This was stated as a firmly established fact in the debates of the Moscow Propagandists, and no one contested it. They were only differently impressed by it—each in his own way. Some viewed it with great misgivings, others with reserve, and others, still, seemed perplexed. It was, anyhow, clear to all, that some big process was going on, very chaotic, assuming, alternatively morbid or revolting, ridiculous or tragic forms, and which had not yet had time to disclose its hidden possibilities of inaugurating a new and higher order of family life. Some information about the disintegration of the family has crept into the press, but just occasionally, and in very vague, general terms. In an article on the subject, I have read that the disintegration of the family in the working-class was represented as a case of “bourgeois influence on the proletariat.” It is not so simple as this. The root of the question lies deeper and is more complicated. The influence of the bourgeois past and the bourgeois present is there, but the main process consists in a

painful evolution of the proletarian family itself, an evolution leading up to a crisis, and we are witnessing now the first chaotic stages of the process.

The deeply destructive influence of the war on the family is well known. To begin with, war dissolves the family automatically, separating people for a long time or bringing people together by chance. This influence of the war was continued and strengthened by the revolution. The years of the war shattered all that had stood only by the inertia of historic tradition. They shattered the power of Tsardom, class privileges, the old traditional family. The revolution began by building up the new state and has achieved thereby its simplest and most urgent aim. The economic part of its problem proved much more complicated. The war shook the old economic order, the revolution overthrew it. Now we are constructing a new economic state—doing it as yet mostly from the old elements, reorganizing them in new ways. In the domain of economics we have but recently emerged from the destructive period and begun to ascend. Our progress is still very slow, and the achievement of new socialistic forms of economic life are

still very distant. But we are definitely out of the period of destruction and ruin. The lowest point was reached in the years 1920-21.

The first destructive period is still far from being over in the life of the family. The disintegrating process is still in full swing. We must bear that in mind. Family and domestic life are still passing, so to say, their 1920-21 period and have not reached the 1923 standard. Domestic life is more conservative than economic, and one of the reasons is that it is still less conscious than the latter. In politics and economics the working-class acts as a whole and pushes on to the front rank its vanguard, the Communistic party accomplishing through its medium the historic aims of the proletariat. In domestic life the working-class is split into cells constituted by families. The change of political regime, the change even of the economic order of the State—the passing of the factories and mills into the hands of the workers—all this has certainly had some influence on family conditions; but only indirectly and externally, and without touching on the forms of domestic traditions inherited from the past. A radical

reform of the family and more generally of the whole order of domestic life requires a big conscious effort on the part of the whole mass of the working-class, and presumes in the class itself the existence of a powerful molecular force of inner desire for culture and progress. A deep-going plough is needed to turn up heavy clods of soil. To institute the political equality of men and women in the Soviet State was one problem and the simplest. A much more difficult one was the next—that of instituting the industrial equality of men and women workers in the factories, the mills and the trade unions, and to do it in such a way that the men should not put the women to disadvantage. But to achieve the actual equality of man and woman within the family is an infinitely more arduous problem. All our domestic habits must be revolutionized before that can happen. And yet it is quite obvious that unless there is actual equality of husband and wife in the family, in a normal sense as well as in the conditions of life, we cannot speak seriously of their equality in social work or even in politics. As long as woman is chained to her housework, the care of the family, the cooking and sewing, all her

chances of participation in social and political life are cut down to the extreme.

The easiest problem was that of assuming power. Yet just that problem alone absorbed all our forces in the early period of the revolution. It demanded endless sacrifices. The civil war necessitated measures of the utmost rigour. Narrow-minded, silly people raised cries of debased morals, of the sanguinary depravation of the proletariat, etc., whereas what had actually happened was that the proletariat, in using the means of revolutionary violence forced into its hands, started to fight for new standards of culture, for genuine humanitarianism. In the first four or five years we have passed economically through a period of terrific breakdown. The productiveness of labour collapsed, and the products were of an appallingly low quality. Enemies saw, or chose to see, in such a situation a sign of the rottenness of the Soviet regime. In reality, however, it was but the inevitable stage of the destruction of the old economic forms, and of the first helpless attempts at the creation of new ones.

In regard to family relations, and forms of individual life in general, there must also be an inevitable period of disintegration of things

as they were of the traditions, inherited from the past, which had not passed under the control of thought. But in this domain of domestic life the period of criticism and destruction begins later, lasts very long and assumes morbid and painful forms, which, however, are complex and not always perceptible to superficial observation. These progressive landmarks of critical change in State conditions, in economics and life in general, ought to be very clearly defined to prevent us getting alarmed by the phenomena we observed. We must learn to judge them in the right light, to understand their proper place in the development of the working-class, and consciously to direct the new conditions towards socialistic forms of life.

The warning is a necessary one, as we already hear voices expressing alarm. At the debate of the Moscow Propagandists some comrades spoke with great and natural anxiety of the easiness with which old family ties are broken for the sake of new ones as fleeting as the old. The victims in all cases are the mother and children. On the other hand, who, in our midst, had not heard in private conversations complaints, not to say lamentations, about the demoralization of

young Sovietists, particularly of those belonging to the Communist unions of the young—the so-called Comsomols? Not everything in these complaints is exaggeration—there is also truth in them. We certainly must—and will fight the dark sides of this truth—this being a fight for higher culture and the ascent of human personality. But in order to begin our work, to tackle the a, b, c of the problem without reactionary moralizing or sentimental down-heartedness, we must first make sure of the facts and begin to see clearly what is actually happening.

Gigantic events, as we said above, have descended on the family in its old shape, the war and the revolution. And following them came creeping slowly the underground mole—critical thought, the conscious study and valuation of family relations and the forms of life. It was the mechanical force of great events combined with the critical force of the awakened mind that generated the destructive period in family relations that we are witnessing now. The Russian worker must now, after the conquest of power, make his first conscious steps towards culture in many departments of his life.

Under the impulse of great collisions, his personality shakes off for the first time all traditional forms of life, all domestic habits, Church practices and relationships. No wonder that, in the beginning, the protest of the individual, his revolt against the traditional past, is assuming anarchic, or to put it more crudely, dissolute forms. We have witnessed it in politics, in military affairs, in economics; here anarchic individualism took on every form of extremism, partizanship, public-meeting rhetoric. And no wonder also that this process reacts in the most intimate and hence most painful way on family relationships. There the awakened personality, wanting to reorganize in a new way, removed from the old beaten tracks, resorts to "dissipation," "wickedness" and all the sins denounced in the Moscow debates.

The husband, torn away from his usual surroundings by mobilization, changed into a revolutionary citizen at the civic front. A momentous change. His outlook is wider, his spiritual aspirations higher and of a more complicated order. He is a different man. And then he returns home to find everything there practically unchanged. The old

harmony and understanding with the people at home in family relationship is gone. No new understanding arises. The mutual wondering changes into mutual discontent, then into ill-will. The family is broken up.

The husband is a Communist. He lives an active life, is engaged in social work, his mind grows, his personal life is absorbed by his work. But his wife is also a Communist. She wants to join in social work, attends public meetings, works in the Soviet or the Union. Home life becomes practically non-existent before they are aware of it, or the missing of home atmosphere results in continual collisions. Husband and wife disagree. The family is broken up.

The husband is a Communist, the wife is non-party. The husband is absorbed by his work ; the wife, as before, only looks after her home. Relations are " peaceful," based, in fact, on customary estrangement. But the husband's committee—the Communist " cell "—decrees that he should take away the ikons hanging in his house. He is quite willing to obey, finding it but natural. For his wife it is a catastrophe. Just such a small occurrence exposes the abyss that

separates the minds of husband and wife. Relations are spoiled. The family is broken up.

An old family. Ten to fifteen years of common life. The husband is a good worker, devoted to his family; the wife lives also for her home, giving it all her energy. But just by chance she comes in touch with a Communist women's organization. A new world opens before her eyes. Her energy finds a new and wider object. The family is neglected. The husband is irritated. The wife is hurt in her newly awakened civic consciousness. The family is broken up.

Examples of such domestic tragedies, all leading to the one end—the breaking up of the family, could be multiplied endlessly. We have indicated the most typical cases. In all our examples the tragedy is due to a collision between Communist and non-party elements. But the breaking up of the family, that is to say, of the old-type family, is not confined to just the top of the class as the one most exposed to the influence of new conditions. The disintegrating movement in family relationships penetrates deeper. The Communist vanguard merely passes sooner and more violently through what is inevitable

for the class as a whole. The censorious attitude towards old conditions, the new claims upon the family extend far beyond the border line between the Communist and the working-class as a whole. The institution of civil marriage was already a heavy blow to the traditional consecrated family which lived a great deal for appearances. The less personal attachment there was in the old marriage ties, the greater was the binding power of the external forces, social traditions, and more particularly, religious rites. The blow to the power of the Church was also a blow to the family. Rites, deprived of binding significance and of State recognition, still remain in use through inertia, serving as one of the props to the tottering family. But when there is no inner bond within the family, when nothing but inertia keeps the family itself from complete collapse, then every push from outside is likely to shatter it to pieces, while, at the same time, it is a blow at the adherence to Church rites. And pushes from the outside are infinitely more likely to come now than ever before. That is the reason why the family totters and fails to recover, and then to tumble again. Life sits in judgment on its conditions and does

it by the cruel and painful condemnation of the family. History fells the old wood—and the chips fly in the wind.

But is life evolving any elements of a new type of family? Undoubtedly. We must only conceive clearly the nature of these elements and the process of their formation. As in other cases, we must separate the physical conditions from the psychological, the general from the individual. Psychologically the evolution of the new family, of new human relationships in general, for us, means the advancement in culture of the working-class, the development of the individual, a raising of the standard of his requirements and inner discipline. From this aspect, the revolution in itself has meant, of course, a big step in advance, and the worst phenomena of the disintegrating family signify merely the abnormality of the form of expression of the awakening class and individuals composing the class. All our work relating to culture, the work we are doing and the work we ought to be doing, becomes, from this aspect, a preparation for new relationships and a new family. Without a raising of the standard of the culture of the individual working man and woman, there cannot be

a new, higher type of family, for, in this domain, we can only, of course, speak of inner discipline and not of external compulsion. The force then of the inner discipline of the individual in the family is conditioned by the tenor of the inner life, the scope and value of the ties that unite husband and wife.

The physical preparations for the conditions of the new life and the new family, again, cannot fundamentally be separated from the general work of socialistic constructiveness. The workers' State must become wealthier in order that it may be possible seriously to tackle the public education of children and the releasing of the family from the burden of the kitchen and laundry. The socialization of family housekeeping and the public education of children is unthinkable without a marked improvement in our economics as a whole. We need more socialistic economic forms. Only under such conditions can we free the family from the functions and cares that now oppress and disintegrate it. Washing must be done by a public laundry, catering by a public restaurant, sewing by a public workshop. Children must be educated by

good public teachers who have a real vocation for the work. Then the bond between husband and wife would be freed from everything external and accidental, and the one would cease to absorb the life of the other. Genuine equality would at last be established. The bond will depend on mutual attachment. And on that account, particularly, it will acquire inner stability, not the same, of course, for everyone, but compulsory for no one.

Thus, the way to the new family is twofold : (a) the raising of the standard of culture and education of the working-class and the individuals composing the class ; (b) an improvement in the material conditions of the class, organized by the State. The two processes are intimately connected with one another.

The above statements do not, of course, imply that at a given moment in the material betterment the family of the future will instantly step into its rights. No. A certain advance towards the new family is possible even now. It is true that the State cannot as yet undertake either the education of the children or the establishment of public kitchens, which would be an improvement

on the family kitchen, or the establishment of public laundries, where the clothes would not be torn or stolen. But this does not mean that the more enterprising and progressive families cannot group themselves even now into collective housekeeping units. Experiments of this kind must, of course, be made carefully ; the technical equipment of the collective unit must answer to the interests and requirements of the group itself, and should give manifest advantages to every one of its members, even though they be modest at first.

“ This task,” Comrade Semashko recently wrote on the necessity of the reconstruction of our family life, “ is best performed practically ; decrees and moralizing alone will have little effect. But an example, an illustration of a new form, will do more than a thousand excellent pamphlets. This practical propaganda is best conducted on the method surgeons in their practice call ‘ transplantation.’ When a big surface is bare of skin either as the result of a wound or burn, and there is no hope that the skin will grow sufficiently to cover it, pieces of skin are cut off from healthy places of the body and attached in islets on the bare surface ; these

islets adhere and grow until the whole surface is covered with skin.

The same thing happens in practical propaganda. When one factory or works adopts communistic forms, other factories will follow.

Such collective family housekeeping units must be carefully thought out and studied. A combination of private initiative, supported by the governing powers—in the first place, the local Soviets and economic organs—must be the first step. The building of new houses—and, after all, we are going to build houses!—must be regulated by the requirements of the family group communities. The first apparent and indisputable success in this direction, however slight and limited in extent, will inevitably arouse a desire in more widespread groups to organize their life on similar lines. For a thought-out scheme, initiated from above, the time is not yet ripe, either from the point of view of the material resources of the State, or from that of the preparation of the proletariat itself. We can escape the deadlock at present only by the creation of model communities. The ground beneath our feet must be strengthened step by step; there must be no rushing too far ahead, or lapsing into bureaucratic fanciful

experiments. At a given moment, the State will be able, with the help of local Soviets, co-operative units and so on, to socialize the work done, to widen and deepen it. In this way the human family, in the words of Engels, will "jump from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom."

CHAPTER V

THE FAMILY AND CEREMONY

CHURCH ceremonial enslaves even the worker of little or no religious belief in the three great moments of the life of man—birth, marriage and death. The workers' State has rejected Church ceremony, and informed its citizens that they have the right to be born, to marry and to die without the mysterious gestures and exhortations of persons clad in cassocks, gowns and other ecclesiastical vestments. But custom finds it harder to discard ceremony than the State. The life of the working family is too monotonous, and it is this monotony that wears out the nervous system. Hence comes the desire for alcohol—a small flask containing a whole world of images. Hence comes the need for the Church and her ritual. How is a marriage to be celebrated, or the birth of a child in a family? How is one to pay the tribute of affection to the beloved dead? It is on this need of

marking and decorating the principal sign-posts along the road of life that Church ritual depends.

What can we set against it? Superstition, which lies at the root of ritual, must, of course, be opposed by rationalistic criticism, by an atheistic, realistic attitude to Nature and her forces. But this question of a scientific, critical propaganda does not exhaust the subject; in the first place it appeals only to a minority, while even this minority feels the need of enriching, improving and ennobling its individual life; at any rate, the more salient events of it.

The workers' State already has its festivals, processions, reviews and parades, symbolic spectacles—the new theatrical ceremonies of State. It is true that in the main they are too closely allied to the old forms, which they imitate and perpetuate. But on the whole, the revolutionary symbolism of the workers' State is novel, distinct and forcible—the red flag, red star, worker, peasant, comrade, International. But within the shut cages of family life the new has not penetrated, or at least, has done so but little, while individual life is closely bound

up with the family. This explains why in the matter of ikons, christenings, Church funerals, etc., the balance is in favour of custom. The revolutionary members of the family have nothing to offer in place of them. Theoretic argument acts on the mind only. Spectacular ceremony acts on the senses and imagination. The influence of the latter, consequently, is much more widespread. In the most communistic of circles a need has arisen to oppose old practices by new forms, new symbols, not merely in the domain of State life, where this has largely been done, but in the domain of the family.

There is a tendency among workers to celebrate the birthday instead of the patron saint's day, and to name new-born infants by some name symbolizing new and intimate events and ideas, rather than by the name of a saint. At the deliberations of the Moscow Propagandists I first learnt that the novel girls' name of Octobrina has come to be associated with the right of citizenship.

There is the name Ninel (Lenin spelt backwards) and Rem (Revolution, Electrification, *Mir*—peace). Infants, too, are given the Christian name of Vladimir, Ilyitch and even Lenin, also Rosa (in honour of Rosa

Luxumbourg) and so on, showing a desire to link up with the revolution.

There have been cases where the birth of a child has been celebrated by a mock ceremonial "inspection" in Fabzavkom, with a special protocol decree adding the infant's name to the list of R.S.F.P. citizens. This was followed by a feast. In a working family the apprenticeship of a boy is also celebrated as a festival. It is an event of real importance, bearing as it does on the choice of a trade, a course of life. This is a fitting occasion for the intervention of the trade union. On the whole, the trade unions ought to play a more important part in the creation of the forms of the new life. The guilds of the Middle Ages were powerful, because they hemmed in the life of the apprentice, labourer and mechanic on all sides. They greeted the child on the day of its birth, led it to the school door, and to church when it married, and buried it when it had fulfilled the duties of its calling. The guilds were not merely trade federations; they were the organized life of the community. It is on these lines that our industrial unions are largely developing, with this difference, certainly, that in opposition to the mediæval, the forms of the

new life will be free from the Church and her superstition and imbued with an aspiration to utilize every conquest of science and machinery for the enrichment and beautifying of life.

Marriage, if you like, more easily dispenses with ceremonial. Though, even in this respect, how many "misunderstandings" and exclusions from the party have there been on account of Church weddings? Custom refuses to be reconciled to the mere marriage, unbeatified by a spectacular ceremony.

The question of burial is an infinitely more difficult one. To be laid in the ground without the due funeral service is as unusual, disgraceful and monstrous as to grow up without baptism. In cases where the standing of the dead has called for a funeral of a political character, the stage has been set for the new spectacular ceremony, imbued with the symbolism of the revolution—the red flag, the revolutionary Dead March, the farewell rifle salute. Some of the members of the Moscow conference emphasized the need for a speedy adoption of cremation, proposing to set an example by cremating the bodies of prominent revolutionary workers. They justly regarded this as a

powerful weapon to be used for anti-Church and anti-religious propaganda. But cremation, which it is high time we adopted, does not mean the giving up of processions, speech-making, marches, the rifle salute. The need for an outer manifestation of emotion is strong and legitimate. If the spectacular has in the past been closely connected with the Church, there is no reason, as we have already said, why it cannot be separated from her. The theatre separated earlier from the Church than the Church from the State. In early days the Church fought very much against the "worldly" theatre, fully realizing that it was a dangerous rival in the matter of spectacular sights. The theatre died except as a special spectacle shut within four walls. But daily custom, which used the spectacular form, was instrumental in preserving the Church. The Church had other rivals in this respect, in the form of secret societies like the Freemasons. But they were permeated through and through with a worldly priesthood. The creation of the revolutionary "ceremonial" of custom (we use the word "ceremonial" for want of a better) and setting it against the "ceremonial" of the Church, is possible not only

on public or State occasions, but in the relationships of family life. Even now a band playing a funeral march competes successfully with the Church funeral music. And we must, of course, make an ally of the band in the struggle against Church ritual, which is based on a slavish belief in another world, where you will be repaid a hundredfold for the miseries and evils of this. A still more powerful ally is the cinema.

The creation of new forms of life and new spectacular customs will move apace with the spread of education and the growth of economic security. We have every cause to watch this process with the utmost care. There cannot, of course, be any question of compulsion from above, i.e. the bureaucratizing of new-born customs. It is only by the creativeness of the general masses of the population, assisted by creative imagination and artistic initiative, that we can, in the course of years and decades, come out on the road of spiritualized, ennobled forms of life. Without regulating this creative process, we must, nevertheless, help it in every way. For this purpose, first of all, the tendency to blindness must give place to sight. We must carefully watch all that

happens in the working family in this respect, and the Soviet family in general. Every new form, whether abortive or a mere approach to one, must be recorded in the press and brought to the knowledge of the general public, in order to stimulate imagination and interest, and give the impulse to further collective creation of new customs.

Komsomol has an honourable place in this work. Not every invention is successful, not every project takes on. What does it matter? The proper choice will come in due course. The new life will adopt the forms most after its own heart. In the result life will be richer, broader, more full of colour and harmony. This is the essence of the problem.

CHAPTER VI

CIVILITY AND POLITENESS AS A NECESSARY LUBRICANT IN DAILY RELATIONSHIPS

DURING the many discussions on the question of our State machinery, Comrade Kiselev, the President of the Subsidiary Council of People's Commissars, brought forward, or, at least, recalled to the mind one side of the question that is of vast importance. In what manner does the machinery of the State come in direct contact with the population? How does it "deal" with the population? How does it treat a caller, a person with a grievance, the "petitioner" of old? How does it regard the individual? How does it address him, if it addresses him at all? . . . This, too, is an important component part of "life."

In this matter, however, we must discriminate between two aspects—form and substance.

In all civilized democratic countries the bureaucracy, of course, "serves" the people. This does not prevent it from raising itself above the people as a closely united professional caste. If it actually serves the capitalistic magnates, that is, cringes before them, it treats the workman and peasant arrogantly, whether it be in France, Switzerland, or America. But in the civilized "democracies" the fact is clothed in certain forms of civility and politeness, in greater or lesser degree in the different countries. But when necessary (and such occasions occur daily) the cloak of civility is easily thrust aside by the policeman's fist; strikers are beaten in Paris police stations, New York and other centres of the world. In the main, however, "democratic" civility in the relations of the bureaucracy with the population is a product and a heritage of bourgeois revolutions. The exploitation of man by man has remained, but the form of it is different, less "brutal," adorned with the cloak of equality and polished politeness. Our Soviet bureaucratic machine is unique, complex, containing as it does the traditions of different epochs together with the germs of future relationships. With us civility, as a

general rule, does not exist. But of rudeness, inherited from the past, we have as much as you please. But our rudeness itself is not homogeneous. There is the simple rudeness of peasant origin, which is unattractive, certainly, but not degrading. It becomes unbearable and objectively reactionary only when our young novelists boast of it as of some extremely "artistic" acquisition. The foremost elements of the workers regard such false simplicity with instinctive hostility, for they justly see in the coarseness of speech and conduct a mark of the old slavery, and aspire to acquire a cultured speech with its inner discipline. But this is by the way. . . .

Side by side with this simple kind, the habitual passive rudeness of the peasant, we have another, a special kind—the revolutionary—a rudeness of the leaders, due to impatience, to an over-ardent desire to better things, to the irritation caused by our indifference to every form of nervous effort. This rudeness, too, if taken by itself, is, of course, not attractive, and we dissociate ourselves from it ; but at bottom, it is often nourished at the same revolutionary moral fount, which, on more than one occasion in these years, has been able to move moun-

tains. In this case it is not the substance that must be changed, which is on the whole healthy, creative and progressive, but the distorted form. . . .

We still have, however—and herein is the chief stumbling-block—the rudeness of the old aristocracy, with the touch of feudalism about it. This kind is vile and vicious throughout. It is still with us, uneradicated, and is not easy to eradicate.

In the Moscow departments, especially in the more important of them, this aristocratic rudeness is not manifested in the aggressive form of shouting and shaking a fist at a petitioner's nose ; it is more often shown in a heartless formality. Of course, the latter is not the only cause of " red tape ; " a very vital one is the complete indifference to the living human being and his living work. If we could take an impression on a sensitive plate of the manners, replies, explanations, orders and signatures of all the cells of the bureaucratic organism, be it only in Moscow for a single day, the result obtained would be one of extraordinary confusion. And it is worse in the provinces, particularly along the border-line where town and country meet, the border-line that is most vital of all.

“Red tape” is a complex, by no means homogeneous phenomenon; it is rather a conglomeration of phenomena and processes of different historical origins. The principles that maintain and nourish “red tape” are also varied. The foremost of them is the condition of our culture—the backwardness and illiterateness of a large proportion of our population. The general muddle resulting from a State machinery in continuous process of reconstruction, inevitable during a period of revolution, is in itself the cause of much superfluous friction, which plays an important part in the manufacture of “red tape.” It is the heterogeneousness of class in the Soviet machine—the admixture of aristocratic, bourgeois and Soviet traditions—that is responsible for the more repulsive of its forms.

Consequently the struggle against “red tape” cannot but have a diversified character. At bottom there is the struggle against the low conditions of culture, illiterateness, dirt and poverty. The technical improvement of the machine, the decrease of staffs, the introduction of greater order, thoroughness and accuracy in the work, and other measures of a similar nature, do not, of course, exhaust the

historic problem, but they help to weaken the more negative sides of "red tape." Great importance is attached to the education of a new type of Soviet bureaucrat—the new "spets" (specialist). But in this also we must not deceive ourselves. The difficulties of educating thousands of new workers in the new ways, i.e. in the spirit of service, simplicity and humanity, under transitional conditions and with preceptors inherited from the past, are great. They are great, but not insuperable. They cannot be overcome at once, but only gradually, by the appearance of a more and more improved "edition" of Soviet youth.

The measures enumerated will take comparatively long years of accomplishment, but they by no means exclude an immediate remorseless struggle against "red tape," against the official contempt for the living human being and his affairs, the truly corrupt ink Nihilism which conceals a dead indifference to everything on earth, a cowardly helplessness which refuses to acknowledge its own dependence, a conscious sabotage, or the instinctive hatred of a deposed aristocracy towards the class which deposed it. These are the main causes of rudeness which

await the application of the revolutionary lever.

We must attain a condition in which the average colourless individual of the working masses will cease to fear the Government departments he has to come in contact with. The greater his helplessness, i.e. the greater his ignorance and illiteracy, the greater attention should be accorded him. It is an essential principle that he should really be helped and not merely be got rid of. For this purpose, in addition to other measures, it is essential that our Soviet public opinion should keep the matter constantly in the foreground, regarding it from as broad an angle as possible, particularly the real Soviet, revolutionary, Communist, subtle elements of the State machine, of which, happily, there are so many by which it is maintained and by which it progresses.

The press can play a decisive part in this respect.

Unfortunately, our newspapers in general give but little instructive matter relating to everyday life. If such matter is given at all it is often in stereotyped reports, such as "We have a works called so and so. At the works there is a works committee and a

director. The works committee does so and so, the director directs." While at the same time our actual life is full of colour and rich in instructive episodes, particularly along the border-line where the machinery of the State comes in contact with the masses of the population. You have only to roll up your sleeves. . . .

Of course, an illuminating, instructive task of this kind must guard itself sevenfold against intrigue, must cleanse itself of cant and every form of demagoguery.

An exemplary "calendar programme" would be to single out a hundred civil servants—single them out thoroughly and impartially—a hundred who showed a rooted contempt in their duties for the working masses, and publicly, perhaps by trial, chuck them out of the State machine, so that they could never come back again. It would be a good beginning. Miracles must not be expected to happen as a result. But a small change from the old to the new is a practical step in advance, which is of greater value than the biggest talk.

CHAPTER VII

STRUGGLE FOR CULTURED SPEECH

I READ lately in one of our papers that at a general meeting of the workmen at the boot factory, the *Paris Commune*, a resolution was carried to abstain from swearing, to impose fines for bad language, etc.

This is a small incident in the turmoil of the present day—but a very telling small incident. Its importance, however, depends on the response the initiative of the boot factory is going to meet with in the working-class.

Abusive language and swearing are a legacy of slavery, humiliation, and disrespect for human dignity—one's own and that of other people. This is particularly the case with swearing in Russia. I should like to hear from our philologists, our linguists and experts in folklore, whether they know of such loose, sticky and low terms of abuse in any other language but Russian. As far as I know, there is nothing, or nearly nothing, of the kind outside Russia. Russian swearing

in "the lower depths" was the result of despair, embitterment and, above all, of slavery without hope, without escape. The swearing of the upper classes, on the other hand, the swearing that came out of the throats of the gentry, the authorities, was the outcome of class rule, slave owner's pride, unshakable power. Proverbs are supposed to contain the wisdom of the masses—Russian proverbs show besides the ignorant and the superstitious mind of the masses and their slavishness. "Abuse does not stick to the collar," says an old Russian proverb, not only accepting slavery as a fact, but submitting to the humiliation of it. Two streams of Russian abuse—that of the masters, the officials, the police, replete and fatty, and the other, the hungry, desperate, tormented swearing of the masses—have coloured the whole of Russian life with despicable patterns of abusive terms. Such was the legacy the Revolution received among others from the past.

But the Revolution is, in the first place, an awakening of human personality in the masses—which were supposed to possess no personality. In spite of occasional cruelty and the sanguinary relentlessness of its

methods, the Revolution is before and above all the awakening of humanity, its onward march, and is marked with a growing respect for the personal dignity of every individual, with an ever-increasing concern for those who are weak. A revolution does not deserve its name if, with all its might and all the means at its disposal, it does not help the woman—twofold and threefold enslaved as she has been in the past—to get out on the road of individual and social progress. A revolution does not deserve its name, if it does not take the greatest care possible of the children—the future race for whose benefit the revolution has been made. And how could one create day by day, if only by little bits, a new life based on mutual consideration, on self-respect, on the real equality of women, looked upon as fellow-workers, on the efficient care of the children—in an atmosphere poisoned with the roaring, rolling, ringing and resounding swearing of masters and slaves, that swearing which spares no one and stops at nothing? The struggle against “bad language” is a condition of intellectual culture, just as the fight against filth and vermin is a condition of physical culture.

To do away radically with abusive speech is not an easy thing, considering that unrestrained speech has psychological roots and is an outcome of uncultured surroundings. We certainly welcome the initiative of the boot factory, and above all we wish the promoters of the new movements much perseverance. Psychological habits which come down from generation to generation and saturate the whole atmosphere of life are very tenacious, and, on the other hand, it often happens with us in Russia that we just make a violent rush forward, strain our forces and then let things drift in the old way.

Let us hope that the working women—those of the Communist ranks in the first place—will support the initiative of the *Paris Commune* factory. As a rule—which has exceptions of course—men who use bad language scorn women, and have no regard for children. This does not apply only to the uncultured masses, but also to the advanced and even the so-called “responsible” elements of the present social order. There is no denying that the old pre-revolutionary forms of bad language are still in use at the present time, six years after October, and are

quite the fashion at the "top." When away from town, particularly from Moscow, our dignitaries consider it in a way their duty to use strong language. They evidently think it a means of getting into closer contact with the peasantry.

Our life in Russia is made up of the most striking contrasts—in economics as well as in everything else. In the very centre of the country, close to Moscow, there are miles of swamps, of impassable roads—and close by you might suddenly see a factory which would impress a European or American engineer by its technical equipment. Similar contrasts abound in our national life. Side by side with some old-time type of domineering rapacious profiteer, who has come to life again in the present generation, who has passed through revolution and expropriation, engaged in swindling and in masked and legalized profiteering, preserving intact all the while his suburban vulgarity and greediness—we see the best type of Communists of the working-class who devote their lives day by day to the interests of the world's proletariat, and are ready to fight at any given moment for the cause of the revolution in any country, even one they would be

unable perhaps to locate on the map. In addition to such social contrasts—obtuse bestiality and the highest revolutionary idealism—we often witness psychological contrasts in the same mind. A man is a sound Communist, devoted to the cause, but women are for him just “females,” not to be taken seriously in any way. Or it happens that a very deserving Communist, when discussing nationalistic matters, starts talking hopelessly reactionary stuff. To account for that we must remember that different parts of the human consciousness do not change and develop simultaneously and on parallel lines. There is a certain economy in the process. Human psychology is very conservative by nature, and the change due to the demands and the push of life affects in the first place those parts of the mind which are directly concerned in the case. In Russia the social and political development of the last decades proceeded in quite an unusual way, in astounding leaps and bounds, and this accounts for our present disorganization and muddle, which is not confined only to economics and politics. The same defects show in the minds of many people resulting in a rather curious blending of advanced,

well-pondered political views with tendencies, habits and, to some extent, ideas which are a direct legacy from ancestral domestic laws. To obviate that, we must straighten out the intellectual front, that is to say, we must test by Marxist methods the whole complex of a man's mentality—and this should be the general scheme of education and self-education of our own party, beginning at the top. But there again the problem is extremely complicated, and could not be solved by school teaching and books alone: the roots of contradictions and psychological inconsistencies lie in the disorganization and muddle of the conditions in which people live. Psychology, after all, is determined by life. But the dependency is not purely mechanical and automatic: it is active and reciprocal. The problem in consequence must be approached in many different ways—that of the *Paris Commune* factory men is one in the number. Let us wish them all possible success.

P.S.—The fight against bad language is also a part of a struggle for the purity, clearness and beauty of Russian speech.

Reactionary blockheads maintain that the Revolution, without having altogether ruined,

is in the way of spoiling the Russian language. There is actually an enormous quantity of words in use now which have originated by chance, many of them perfectly needless, provincial expressions, some contrary to the spirit of our language. And yet the reactionary blockheads are quite mistaken about the future of the Russian language—as about all the rest. Out of the revolutionary turmoil our language will come strengthened, rejuvenated, with an increased flexibility and delicacy. Our pre-revolutionary, obviously ossified bureaucratic and liberal press language is already considerably enriched by new descriptive forms, by new, much more precise and dynamic expressions. But during all these stormy years our language has certainly become greatly obstructed, and part of our progress in culture will, among other things, show in our casting out of our speech all useless words and expressions, and those which are not in keeping with the spirit of the language, whilst preserving the unquestionable and invaluable linguistic acquisitions of the revolutionary epoch.

Language is the instrument of thought. Precision and correctness of speech is an indispensable condition of correct and precise

thinking. The political power has passed now, for the first time in our history, into the hands of labour. The working-class possesses a rich store of work and life experience, and a language based on that experience. But our proletariat has not had sufficient schooling in elementary reading and writing, not to speak of literary education. And this is the reason why the now governing working-class, which is in itself and by its social nature a powerful safeguard of the integrity and greatness of the Russian language in the future, does not, nevertheless, stand up now with the necessary energy against the intrusion of needless, corrupt and sometimes hideous new words and expressions. When people say, "a pair of weeks," "a pair of months" (instead of several weeks, several months), this is stupid and ugly. Instead of enriching the language it impoverishes it: the word "pair" loses in the process its real meaning (in the sense of "a pair of boots"). Faulty words and expressions have come into use because of the intrusion of mispronounced foreign words. Proletarian speakers, even those who should know better, say, for instance, "incindent" instead of "incident," or they say "instict" instead

of "instinct" or "legurarly" instead of "regularly." Such misspellings were not unfrequent also in the past, before the Revolution. But now they seem to acquire a sort of right of citizenship. No one corrects such defective expressions out of a sort of false pride. That is wrong. The struggle for education and culture will provide the advanced elements of the working-class with all the resources of the Russian language in its extreme richness, subtlety and refinement. To preserve the greatness of the language, all faulty words and expressions must be weeded out of daily speech. Speech is also in need of hygiene. And the working-class needs a healthy language not less but rather more than the other classes: for the first time in history it begins to think independently about nature, about life and its foundations—and to do the thinking it needs the instrument of a clear incisive language.

CHAPTER VIII

AGAINST BUREAUCRACY, PROGRESSIVE AND UNPROGRESSIVE

I HAVE to speak again—probably not for the last time—about the problems of life in the working-class. My object is to defend the increasing and to my mind most valuable interest of the masses in these problems against the attacks of more bureaucratic than progressive critics.

Progressive bureaucracy disapproves of all discussions on problems of life in the press, at meetings and in clubs. What is the use, they say, of wasting time in discussions? Let the authorities start running communal kitchens, crèches, laundries, hostels, etc. Bureaucratic dullards usually add (or rather imply, or say in whispers—they prefer that to open speech): “It is all words, and nothing more.” The bureaucrat hopes (I wonder whether he has some brilliant financial plan handy) that when we get rich, we shall, without further words, present the

proletariat with cultured conditions of life as with a sort of birthday gift. No need, say such critics, to carry on propaganda for socialistic conditions among the masses—the process of labour itself creates “a sense of socialness.”

What should one reply to such arguments? If that “sense of socialness,” created by the process of labour, had been a sufficient means to solve the problems of Socialism, what need is there of a Communist party? In reality, however, the way is extremely long from the vague “sense of socialness” to a determined will for the reconstruction of life. The work of our party lies all along that way. The problems of life must be made to pass into the consciousness of the masses. No government, even the most active and enterprising, can possibly transform life without the initiative of the masses. The State can organize conditions of life down to the last cell of the community—the family, but unless these cells combine by their own choice and will into a commonwealth, no serious and radical changes can possibly be achieved in economic conditions and home life.

The problem in our case does not amount

only to the lack of new life institutions, such as communal kitchens, crèches, houses run as communes. We know very well that many women have refused to give their children to be looked after in the crèches. Nor would they do it now, hidebound as they are by inertness and prejudice against all innovations. Many houses which had been allotted to families living in communes got into filthy conditions and became uninhabitable. People living in them did not consider communistic housing as a beginning of new conditions—they looked upon their dwellings as upon barracks provided by the State. As a result of unpreparedness, hasty methods, lack of self-discipline and want of culture, the communes very often have proved an utter failure. The problems of life require a thorough critical study, and well-pondered careful methods are needed to deal with them. The onward march must have a well-secured rear in *an increased consciousness of home conditions and increased demands of cultured life on the part of the men and women of the working-class—especially the women.*

Let me point to a few recent cases, which illustrate the relation between the initiative

of the State and that of the masses in regard to the problems of life. At the present time, and thanks to the energy of Comrade Kerjentzev, a very important element of life—*punctuality*—has become an object of organized attention. Looking upon that problem from a bureaucratic point of view, one might say: “Why bother to discuss it at all? What is the use of carrying on propaganda, founding a league with badges for the members, etc.? Let the authorities enforce punctuality by a decree and have penalties attached for infringements.” But such a decree exists already. About three years ago I had—with the strong support of Comrade Lenin—a regulation about punctual attendance at business meetings, committees, etc., passed and duly ratified by the Party and the Soviets. There were also, as usual, penalties attached for infringements of the decree. Some good *was* done by the regulation, but unfortunately not much. Very responsible workers continue up to the present time to be half an hour and more late for committee meetings. They honestly believe that it comes from having too many engagements, but in reality their unpunctuality is due to carelessness and lack of regard for

time—their own and other people's. A man who is always late because he is "frightfully busy," works as a rule less and less efficiently than another who comes in time wherever he is due. It is rather curious that during the debates about the "League of Time" people seemed simply to have forgotten that such a decree existed. I, on my part, have never seen it mentioned in the press. This shows how difficult it is to reform bad habits by legislation alone. The above-mentioned decree ought certainly to be rescued from oblivion, and used as a support of the League of Time. But unless we are helped by the efforts of the advanced labour elements to achieve punctuality and efficiency, administrative measures will not accomplish much good. The "responsible" workers ought to be put into the limelight of public control—then perhaps they will be careful not to steal the time of hundreds and thousands of workers.

Take now another case. The "authorities" have been fighting for several years against bad printing, bad proof reading, bad stitching and folding of books and papers. Some improvement has been achieved, but not much. And these shortcomings in our

printing and publishing are certainly not due to our technical deficiency. The fault is with the readers who are not sufficiently exacting, not sufficiently cultured. The *Workman's Paper*—to take one instance out of many—is folded—who knows why—across the width of the page, not the length. Before starting to read, the reader has to refold the paper in the right way and to put the turned-in page in its right place. To do it all, say in a tramcar, is not an easy matter. No bourgeois publisher would dare to present a paper to his readers like that. The *Workers' Moscow* is published with its eight pages uncut. Readers have to cut the pages with whatever happens to be there, usually with the hand, tearing more often than not part of the text. The paper gets crumpled and not in a condition to be passed on to another reader after being read by the first. Why should such carelessness be tolerated? Progressive bureaucracy, of course, would put all the blame on the inertness of the publishers. Their inertness is bad. We fight against it—using even such weapons as resolutions of Party conferences. But worse still is the passiveness of the readers, their disregard for their own comfort—their lack

of cultured habits. Had they just once or twice thumped with their fists (in some cultured way, I mean) on the publisher's table, he never would dare to issue his paper uncut. That is why even such minor matters as the cutting of the pages of a paper and the stitching of books should be carefully investigated, and widely discussed in public. This is an educational means of raising the standard of culture in the masses.

And still more does this apply to the complicated net of inner relations in personal and family life. No one actually imagines that the Soviet government is going to create admirably furnished houses—communes provided with all sorts of comforts—and invite the proletariat to give up the places where they live now and to move into new conditions. Supposing even such a gigantic enterprise could have been effected (which, of course, is out of question)—that would not really help things. People cannot be made to move into new habits of life—they must grow into them gradually, as they had grown into their old ways of living. Or they must deliberately and consciously create a new life—as they will do in the future. The reorganization of life ought to, and can, be

started already with the means provided by the wages paid under our Soviet conditions. Whatever these wages are, housekeeping in common is more practical than for each family separately. One kitchen in a large room, which has been made bigger at the expense of one or two rooms next to it, is a more profitable arrangement than five, not to speak of ten, separate kitchens. But if changes are to be achieved by the initiative of the masses—with the support of the authorities—it is obvious that just a vague “sense of socialness” alone will not do it. There must be a clear understanding of things as they are and as they ought to be. We know how enormously the development of the working-class has profited by the changes from individual to collective agreements, and what detailed work had to be done by the trade unions, how carefully the matter and all the technical details had to be discussed and agreed upon at the endless delegates’ and other meetings. The change from separate households to housekeeping in common for many families is much more complicated, and of a much greater importance. The old secluded type of family life has developed behind people’s backs, whereas the new life on

a communal basis cannot come into existence unless helped by conscious effort on the part of all who participate in the change. The first step towards a new order of things must be, in consequence, the showing-up of the contradiction between the new requirements of life and the old habits—a contradiction which becomes more and more unbearable. This is what the revolutionary party has to do. The working-class must become aware of the contradictions in its home life, must get at the core of the problem with full understanding, and when this is done, if only by the very advanced elements of the class, no inertness of Soviet bureaucrats will stand against the enlightened will of the proletariat.

Let me wind up my polemics against bureaucratic views on the problems of life by a very illustrative story of Comrade Kartchevsky, who had tried to tackle the problem of reformed housekeeping by co-operative methods. "On the day of international co-operation," writes Comrade Kartchevsky (I am quoting his letter to me), "I had a talk with my next-door neighbours—poor people of the working-class. It did not look promising at first. 'Bother the co-operatives,' they said. 'What is the use of

them? They charge higher prices than in the market—and you have to walk miles to get to the co-operative stores.’ And so on. I tried another method. ‘Well,’ I said, ‘suppose our co-operative system is 90 per cent wrong. But let us analyse the idea and the aims of co-operation, and for the sake of better understanding and making allowance for our habits of ownership, let us consider in the first place our own interests and wants.’ They all, of course, agreed that we want a club, a crèche, a communal kitchen, a school, a laundry, a playing-ground for the children, etc. Let us see how we could manage to have it all. Then one of them shouted, losing his temper: ‘You said we were to have a commune fitted up, but we don’t see anything of it yet.’ I stopped him. ‘Who are the *you*? All of us here have agreed to the necessity of having these institutions organized. Did you not complain just now that the children suffer from the dampness in your basement flat, and your wife is tied like a slave to her kitchen? A change of such conditions is the common interest of all of us. Let us manage things in some improved way. How shall we do it? There are eight flats in our house. The inner court is small.

There is no room for many things, and whatever we might be able to organize will be very expensive.' We started discussing the matter. I made one suggestion: 'Why not have a larger community, the district, to join us in our scheme?' After that suggestions began to pour in, and all sorts of possibilities were discussed. A very characteristic offer came from a man with rather bourgeois views on property: 'Private ownership of houses is abolished,' he said. 'Let us pull down the fences and make a cesspool for the whole district to prevent the poisoning of the air.' And another added: 'Let us have a playing-ground for the children in the middle.' Then a third came with a suggestion: 'Let us ask the Soviet authorities to give us a big house in our district, or, at the worst, let us make shift in some way to have room for a club and a school.' More and more demands and suggestions followed: 'What about a communal kitchen? And a crèche?—You men think only about yourselves'—that came from the women—'you have no thought for us.'

"Now every time I meet them, they ask—the women particularly: 'What about your plan? Do let us start things. Won't it be

nice?' They propose to call a district meeting on the matter. Every district has some ten or twenty Communists living in it, and I hope that with the support of the Party and Soviet institutions we shall be able to do something. . . ."

This case falls in with the general idea I have expounded, and it clearly shows that it is well to have the problems of life ground by the grinders of collective proletarian thought. The grinders are strong, and will master anything they are given to grind.

And there is another lesson in the story. "You only think about yourselves," said the women to Comrade Kartchevsky, "and you have no thought for us." It is quite true that there are no limits to masculine egotism in ordinary life. In order to change the conditions of life we must learn to see them through the eyes of women. This, however, is another story, and I hope to have a talk about the matter on some other occasion.

CHAPTER IX

HOW TO BEGIN ?

PROBLEMS of working-class life, especially of family life, have begun to interest, we might say to absorb, working-class correspondents of newspapers. The interest, to a great extent, has come unawares.

The average working-class newspaper correspondent experiences great difficulties in his attempts to describe life. How is he to tackle the problem? How to begin? To what is he to draw attention? The difficulty is not one of literary style—that is a problem in itself—but arises from the fact that the Party has not yet specifically considered the problems relating to the daily life of the working masses. We have never thrashed out these questions concretely as, at different times, we have thrashed out the questions of wages, fines, the length of the working day; police persecution, the constitution of the State, the ownership of land, and so on.

We have as yet done nothing of the kind in regard to the family and the private life of the individual worker generally. At the same time, the problem is not an inconsiderable one, if for no other reason than that it absorbs two-thirds of life—sixteen of the twenty-four hours in the day. We already observe, in this respect, the danger of a clumsy, almost brutal, attempt at interference in the private life of the individual. On some occasions—fortunately they are rare ones—workmen correspondents treat questions of family life as they do those of production in the factory, i.e. when writing of the life of this or that family, every member of it is mentioned by name. This habit is wrong, dangerous and inexcusable. A workman-director performs a public function. So does a member of a works committee. Holders of these offices are continually in the public eye, and are subject to free criticism. It is another thing with family life.

Of course, the family, too, fulfils a public function. It perpetuates the population and partly educates the new generation. Regarded from this angle, the workers' State has a perfect right to hold the reins of

control and regulation in the life of the family in matters relating to hygiene and education. But the State must use great caution in its incursions into family life ; it must exercise great tact and moderation ; its interference must be solely concerned with according the family more normal and dignified conditions of life ; it must guarantee the sanitary and other interests of the workers, thus laying the foundations for healthier and happier generations.

As for the press, its casual and arbitrary incursion into family life, when the family itself does not evince any desire for it, is perfectly intolerable.

Without careful explanations, the clumsy, untimely interference on the part of the press into the private life of people connected by family ties can only increase the number of perplexities, and do great harm. Moreover, as information of the kind is practically not subject to control, owing to the extreme privacy of family life, correspondence on this subject may, in unscrupulous hands, become a means for the settling of private accounts, a means of ridicule, extortion, revenge and so on.

In some of the numerous articles recently

published on questions of family life, I have come across the idea, frequently repeated, that not only the public activities of the individual member are important for the Party, but his private life as well. This is an indisputable fact. The more so in that the conditions of the individual life are reflected in a man's public activities. The question is how to react on the individual life. If material conditions, standard of culture, international arrangements prevent the introduction of a radical change in life, then a public exposure of given families, parents, husbands, wives and so on, will bring no practical results and will threaten to swamp the party with cant—a disease which is dangerous and catching. The disease of cant, like typhoid, has various forms. Cant sometimes springs from the highest motives and from a sincere but mistaken solicitude about Party interests, but it sometimes happens, however, that Party interests are used as a cloak for other interests—group interests, departmental and personal interests. To arouse public interest in questions of family life by preaching would undoubtedly poison the movement with the noxious poison of cant. A careful investigation on our part

into the domain of family custom must have as an objective the enlightenment of the Party. It must psychologically improve the individual and make for a new orientation in State institutions, trade unions and co-operative units. Under no conditions must it encourage cant.

How under these circumstances shall we enlighten the family. How shall we begin?

There are two fundamental ways. The first is by means of popular articles or stories. Every mature and thinking workman has a sum of impressions of family life stored in his memory. These are refreshed by daily observations. With this material as a foundation we can produce articles dealing with family life as a whole with its changes, as well as with particular sides of it, giving the more striking examples without mentioning the name of a single family or person. Where names of families and places have to be mentioned, they should be fictitious ones, so that no particular person or family could be associated with them. On this pattern, many interesting and valuable articles have recently appeared in *Pravda* and in provincial publications. The second method is to take an actual family, this time by

name, according to the figure it cuts in public opinion. It is the catastrophes in a family that bring it within the sphere of public opinion and judgment, i.e. murders, suicides, law cases, as a result of jealousy, cruelty, parental despotism, and so on. As the strata of a mountain are better seen in a landslide, so the catastrophes in a family bring into greater relief the characteristics that are common to thousands of families who have managed to escape them. We have already mentioned in passing that our press has no right to ignore the occurrences that justly agitate our human bee-hive. When a deserted wife appeals to the court to compel her husband to contribute towards the support of his children ; when a wife seeks public protection from the cruelty and violence of her husband ; when the cruelty of parents towards their children becomes a question of public consideration, or, vice versa, when ailing parents complain of the cruelty of their children, the press not only has a right, but is in duty bound to take up the business and throw light on such sides of it as the court or other public institution does not devote sufficient attention to. Facts brought to light as a

result of court proceedings have not been made sufficient use of in tackling the problems of life. Nevertheless, they deserve an important place. In a period of upheaval and reconstruction in the daily relationships of life, the Soviet tribunal ought to become an important factor in the organization of the new forms of life, in the evolution of new conceptions of right and wrong, false and true. The press should follow the doings of the court ; it should throw light on and supplement its work, and, in a certain sense, direct it. This provides a large field for educational activities. Our best journalists ought to provide a kind of feuilleton on court proceedings. Of course, the usual patent methods of journalism are out of place here. We want imagination and we want conscience. A communistic, i.e. a broad, revolutionary public treatment of questions of the family by no means excludes psychology and the consideration of the individual and his inner world.

I will cite here a small example from the provinces which has lately come to my notice. In Piatigorsk a young girl of seventeen shot herself because her mother refused her consent to her marriage with a Red Army

commander. In commenting on the event the local paper, *Terek*, unexpectedly ended its remarks by reproaching the Red Army commander for being prepared—O reader—to connect himself with a girl of a family so backward ! I had meant writing a letter to the editor, expressing my indignation, not only for the sake of the Red commander, whom I did not know, but to ask for a proper statement of the case. I was absolved from the necessity of sending a letter, however, by the fact that some two or three days later an article on the subject appeared in the same paper, which treated the question in a more proper manner. New daily relationships must be built with the human material we have at our disposal ; the Red Army commander is not excluded from this material ; parents, naturally, have a right to interest themselves in the fate of their children and to influence their fate by their experience and advice, but young people are under no obligation to submit to their parents, particularly in their choice of a friend or a partner for life ; the despotism of parents must not be combated by suicide, but by a rallying of the young, by mutual support and so on. It is all very elementary,

but perfectly true. There is no doubt that an article of the kind, coming on top of the poignant event which excited the little town, contributed more towards stimulating the thought and feeling of the reader, especially of the young reader, than the irritating phrases about petty bourgeois elements, etc.

The comrades who hold that "throwing light" on questions of family life is immaterial as "we" know, and have already solved the questions long ago, are cruelly deceived. They simply forget that politically we have much untilled land! If the older generation, which is more and more diminishing, learnt Communism in the facts of a class struggle, the new generation is destined to learn it in the elements of construction, the elements of construction of everyday life. The formulæ on our programme are, in principle, true. We must continually prove them, renew them, make them concrete in living experience and spread them in a wider sphere.

The laying of new foundations in custom will take a long time and will demand greater concreteness and specialization. Just as we have our army agitators, our industrial agitators, our anti-religious propagandists,

so must we educate propagandists and agitators in questions of custom. As the women are the more helpless by their present limitations, and custom presses more heavily on their shoulders and backs, we may presume that the best agitators on these questions will come from their ranks. We want enthusiasts, we want fanatics, we want people whose horizon is sufficiently broad, who will know how to reckon with the tenacity of custom, who will bring a creative consideration to every peculiarity, every little thing and detail in the bonds of family custom, invisible to the naked eye. Such people are sure to come, for the needs and the questions of the hour are of too burning a nature. This does not imply that mountains will be moved at once. No ; material conditions cannot be escaped. Nevertheless, all that can be attained within the limitations of present conditions will come when we can break the prison-like silence surrounding our present-day customs.

We must speed up the education of agitators against custom and make their work easier. We must institute a library in which we must collect everything we possess relating to the customs of everyday life—classic works

on the evolution of the family and popular writings on the history of custom—making an investigation into the different sides of our daily life. We ought to translate from foreign languages anything of value that has appeared on the subject in recent years. Later on we can develop and expound corresponding sections in our newspapers. Who knows? Perhaps in a year or two we may have to institute a course of lectures on questions relating to the customs of everyday life.

But all this merely touches education, propaganda, the press, literature. What are we to do on the practical side? Some comrades advocate the immediate formation of a league for the inauguration of the new forms of life. The idea seems to me premature. The soil has not been sufficiently prepared; the general conditions are not yet propitious enough. Generally speaking, the formation of such an organizing instrument will become inevitable some time or other. We cannot afford to wait for everything to happen from above, as a result of government initiative. The new social structure must proceed simultaneously on all sides. The proletarian State is the structural timber,

not the structure itself. The importance of a revolutionary government in a period of transition is immeasurable ; even the best section of international anarchists have begun to understand this, as a result of our experience. It does not mean that all the work of building will be performed by the State. The fetish of the State, even though it be a proletarian State, does not become us Marxists. Even in the domain of armaments, a more definite province of the State, we have had to resort (and successfully) to the voluntary initiative of workman and peasant. The preliminary work in the development of aviation has also been done on this basis. There is no doubt that the " Society of Friends of the Air Fleet " has a big future in front of it. The voluntary groups and associations of a local or federal character in the domain of industry, national economy, particularly in the domain of daily custom, are destined to play as big a part. Already we can see a tendency towards free co-operation on the part of Red directors, workmen correspondents, proletarian and peasant writers, etc. A league has lately been formed for the purpose of studying the Soviet union, with the ulterior motive of influencing, what

we call, the national character. It is thought, for instance, that sooner or later—sooner rather than later—the State Cinema Department will be aided by a newly constituted “Society of Friends of the Red Cinema,” destined to become a powerful revolutionary institution.

Voluntary associations of the kind can only be welcomed. They mark the awakening of the public activities of different sections of the community. Of course the socialist structure is, above all, a structure according to plan. Not an *a priori*, all-embracing, all-seeing, preconceived plan with all the details worked out before the commencement of operations, but a plan that, while being prepared in all the essentials, is verified and improved in the building, growing more vital and concrete in the degree to which public initiative has gone towards its evolution and drawing up. In the general compass of the State plan there opens up a vast field for the activities of voluntary associations and co-operative units. Among the many millions of our population there are countless interests, forces, energies, a hundredth part of which cannot be utilized by the State, but which, given the requisite

form for their organizing abilities, can be made to do excellent work, side by side with the State. A genuine leadership of creative organizing, especially in our "culture period," must aim at discovering suitable ways of utilizing the constructive energies of individual groups, persons and co-operative units, and must base itself on the increasing independent activities of the masses. Many of these voluntary associations will collapse or change, but, on the whole, their number will increase as our work deepens and expands. The league for the inauguration of the new forms of life will doubtless occupy the foremost place among them, working in conjunction with the State, local Soviets, trade unions and particularly with co-operative units. For the time being, the formation of such a central organization is premature, however. Far better would it be to form local groups in factories for the study of questions relating to working-class life, the activities of these groups to have a purely voluntary character.

Greater attention must be paid to the facts of everyday life. Central experiments must be tried where material and ideal conditions would make for their success. The widening

of boundaries in a block of flats, a group of houses, a district, will all make for practical progress. The initiatory associations should have a local character. They should set themselves definite tasks, such as the establishment of crèches, laundries, common kitchens for groups of houses. A wider scope of activity will follow greater experience and the improvement of material conditions. To sum up, we want initiative, competition, efficiency !

The primary task, the one that is most acute and urgent, is to break the silence surrounding the problems relating to daily life.

